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With the second inauguration of President Trump the distinctions between truth, phantasy, conspiracy and reality will be in question as never before. This is the man who claimed, seemingly in all seriousness, that illegal Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio have been eating the town's pet animals, and who speaks of climate change as a "Chinese hoax". One has become so inured to his skilled crowd-pleasing utterances that the most insidious effects can easily be overlooked: disregard for truth is one thing, but disregard for established scientific facts about the real world is quite another matter. Now, with the tech giants' collective retreat from 'fact-checking' on their social media platforms, instantaneous global dissemination of misinformation and fake news is unconstrained. The First Amendment prohibits the most extreme forms of hate speech but, even assuming there were the means and willingness to enforce this, it would be too late.

The assault on the Capitol on January 6th 2021 exemplifies much about the situation in the USA. But the riots that followed the tragic Southport killings in July 2024 brought home how the absence of timely and trusted information allows fake facts to take over. It would be easy to scoff at the credulity of the public that made possible the moral panic described in the book by Beth Linker reviewed below, but has anything fundamentally changed? Pseudo-scientific ideas are often at the heart of conspiracy theories. But the oversimplification of scientific evidence is an equal cause for concern: the risk is that as a result of oversimplification the public comes to assume that it is adequately equipped to draw conclusions and to express opinions that drive national policies. At a certain point the gap between expert scientific knowledge and the limits to the public's scientific literacy becomes a critical issue: every academic is likely to be become

Science is for real

aware of the scale of the divide between the complexities of their own narrow areas of expertise and how their subject is seen by the wider public.

Scientists would argue that our responses to pandemics, climate change and AI must be founded on the established evidence and that, in such cases, science has reached a full-enough understanding of the nature of the real-world challenges to be faced, despite the complexities and diverse speciali-

ties involved. But we know that sections of the public dismiss all this as mere scientific hubris. The re-election of President Trump is evidence enough that a clear majority in the USA does not trust science, let alone understand it.

A recent study from the Royal Society (see *Reminders*) considers how misinformation originates, is spread and can be countered.

"While misinformation isn't a new problem – and uncertainty and debate are intrinsic parts of science – the internet has drastically magnified the speed and scale at which poor quality information can spread. The report highlights how online misinformation on scientific issues, like climate change or vaccine safety, can harm individuals and society. It stresses that censoring or removing inaccurate, misleading and false content, whether it's shared unwittingly or deliberately, is not a silver bullet and may undermine the scientific process and public trust. Instead, there needs to be a focus on building resilience against harmful misinformation across the population and the promotion of a "healthy" online information environment."

The Report recognises the overriding importance of trust and goes on to identify sources of information that could be relied upon, given of course that the public recognises the need.

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...and much more

Universities are the primary sources of new scientific discoveries and the best available repositories of expert knowledge and understanding of the issues, but all this would become compromised in an environment of distrust. At present trust *within* universities is being tested. A precondition for the work of academics is their freedom to extend the boundaries of knowledge even if this leads them into controversial territory, but in our currently disputatious times they may fear to face the risks involved. The Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act 2023 is a timely development, made necessary in the light of recent cases – some well-known examples have previously been discussed in the *Magazine* – in which academics have lost their jobs for taking certain positions within their field of expertise. Such cases must make colleagues think twice about what they can say, perhaps to the point of self-censoring their academic work. *Academics for Academic Freedom's* “Banned List” documents a hundred cases of forms of “no-platforming” of academics for their opinions that have occurred in UK universities since 2005. It follows that staff may no longer feel that they can trust in the support of their institutions. Certain avenues of research can become no-go areas.

The troubled history of the Act since the Bill's introduction in May 2021 shows how delicate a balancing act is entailed in its mix of proposed measures. Within days of assuming office the Labour government – most unusually – suspended the Act which was about to come into force on 1st August 2024, pending revision or revocation, even though it had been supported by both main parties. Now, just ahead of a legal challenge by the Free Speech Union, Bridget Phillipson has announced modifications to the Act. The reasons behind the minister's action can perhaps be deduced from the revisions she now proposes. The new tort and liabilities on student unions are ditched, on the grounds of the onerous and costly consequences that could have resulted. It had been argued – presumably by the UUK, representing Vice-Chancellors – that the original Act would potentially have allowed a banned Holocaust denier to claim abuse of their free speech rights and to subject a university to crippling costs in court. Less convincing, but no doubt tricky for diplomatic relations with China, is the possible removal of a requirement on each university to publish the numbers of their students with foreign nationalities.

Has the revised Act become a toothless tiger as some have claimed? The FSU is still threatening a judicial review in order to force revisions of the revisions. The

surviving core of the Act is the Office for Student's complaints arbitration scheme in the hands of a Director of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, backed up by financial penalties and possible de-registration. Universities are already subject to a number of regulatory obligations (e.g., the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 2018 along with UK GDPR 2016, the Online Safety Act 2023 and Human Rights Law) that will, confusingly, overlap those to be introduced in the new scheme. The new mechanism could potentially relieve universities of the prolonged and reputation-damaging processes of Employment Tribunals. And ideally it could provide a streamlined way of achieving fair resolutions of the more complex disputes, with the added advantage of overcoming inconsistencies in the way complaints are handled at present.

The independent Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education already exists as an ombudsman to handle student complaints, while the OfS complaints scheme applies to staff matters – although one can imagine situations where cases will involve both bodies. The new OfS complaints procedure will probably echo the experience of the OIA. From a slow start in 2004 the OIA received 2,137 complaints in 2023, of which 21% of cases were deemed to be justified (2%), partly Justified (7%) or were settled in favour of the student (12%).

As the historian Andrew Lownie put it: “Whereas in America the assumption is that everything should be released unless there are strong grounds to withhold documents, such as national security or data protection, the complete opposite mindset exists in Britain” (*Politico*, 12th March 2023). The respecting of confidentiality of persons involved in complaints processes means that universities tend to reveal as little as possible about the handling of cases. Resort to the Freedom of Information Act has limitations due to the permitted exemptions. How then will the new Act potentially improve on the current situation? Universities will be required to report annually on their fulfilment of their stated free speech policies. The Act forbids the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements in the settlement of cases but the best way for the scheme to disclose information that makes plain exactly how disputes arise and are equitably resolved will be through the publication of detailed case histories, anonymised as necessary. The beneficial impact of the new Act will perhaps be judged by the effectiveness of the OfS scheme in setting new standards of transparency.

T.J.H



Reminders



The following extracts are taken from the Royal Society's Report 'The Online Information Environment' (January 2022); citations and notes are omitted – ed

Tools and approaches for countering misinformation

In response to the challenges of online misinformation, an anti-misinformation ecosystem has emerged across the public, private, and third sector. This ecosystem consists of investigative journalists; academic researchers; technology companies; educational charities; lawyers; government bodies; and internet users. Each constituent part of the ecosystem plays an essential role in creating a healthier online information environment. Their activities are centred around helping the public understand how misinformation works, detecting misinformation content, correcting viral mistruths, limiting damage, delivering justice, and preventing misinformation content.

Automated detection systems

It is estimated that millions of messages are submitted online by internet users every minute. On WhatsApp, 42 million messages are sent per minute. These high quantities make it unfeasible for there to be a manual review of each piece of shared digital content. As a result, major platforms have developed automated review systems which can detect, flag, and address problematic content.

These systems are not fully automated and often require human intervention at the training stage (eg tagging training datasets) and for appeals (where sanctioned users challenge a decision made against them). These systems can be applied to detect illegal content (eg child abuse images, violent content), harmful content (eg hate speech, health misinformation), and specific types of content (eg copyrighted music, deepfakes).

Automated detection systems can be applied for various purposes including:

- Blocking content at the point of upload
- Removing content shortly after upload
- Flagging problematic content
- Adding context and resources to content

These systems are imperfect and have a number of limitations. The Center for Democracy and Technology identify the following five limitations:

- i. Natural language processing (NLP) tools perform best when they are trained and applied in specific domains and cannot necessarily be applied with the same reliability across different contexts.
- ii. Decisions based on automated social media content analysis risk further marginalising and disproportionately censoring groups that already face discrimination (by amplifying social biases).

- iii. NLP tools require clear, consistent definitions of the type of speech to be identified; policy debates around content moderation and social media mining tend to lack such precise definitions.
- iv. The relatively low accuracy and intercoder reliability achieved in natural language processing studies warn strongly against widespread application of the tools to social media content moderation.
- v. Even state-of-the-art NLP tools remain easy to evade and fall far short of humans' ability to parse meaning from text.

A further limitation is the impact that training automated tools can have on the mental health of workers who are annotating or reviewing harmful content.

Despite these issues, automated detection systems remain a significant part of the anti-misinformation ecosystem and are used as a key performance indicator by social media platforms to assess the quality of their response to misinformation content.

Emerging anti-misinformation sector

A small sector of anti-misinformation organisations has formed over recent years and has become an important part of the anti-misinformation ecosystem. These are part of the wider 'safety tech' sector and include organisations working on automated detection systems, fact-checking, user-initiated protection services, and support for human moderators. A number of these organisations work in co-operation with major social media platforms to combat scientific misinformation with these partnerships featuring in promotional advertising campaigns.

The sector, which is yet to mature and contains many start-ups, is vulnerable to funding challenges. Due to the nature of their work, it can be undesirable to take funding from governments or technology companies. The sector also lacks consistent definitions and approaches on misinformation content, however initiatives such as the Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network seek to address this by promoting best practice in the field. The Poynter Institute have also identified the business model and sustainability of fact-checking organisations as a key challenge.

Other organisations in the sector focus on developing automated detection systems, advising marketing agencies on where not to place adverts, tracking the spread of misinformation content, and creating trust ratings for news websites.

Provenance enhancing technology

Focusing instead on the origins of content rather than its value, organisations developing provenance enhancing technologies aim to equip information consumers with the means to help them decide whether a piece of content is genuine and not manipulated. This is achieved by ap-

plying the content's metadata (eg sender, recipient, time stamp, location) to determine who created it, how it was created, and when it was created.

This is the primary aim of the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (an initiative led by Adobe, ARM, the BBC, Intel, Microsoft, TruePic, and Twitter) which is developing a set of technical specifications on content provenance. If sufficiently enabled, platforms would be able to better address or label problematic content and information consumers will be able to determine the veracity of a claim, image, or video.

APIs for research

Taking advantage of the openness of the internet and the benefits of collective intelligence, some organisations (eg Twitter and the NHS) enable application programming interfaces (APIs). These APIs are a mechanism which make it possible for one entity to have access to data held by another entity. In the online information environment, APIs can enable researchers to analyse the spread of content across social media platforms and can enable third party providers access to high quality resources. However, these APIs have been criticised for being overly restrictive following the Cambridge Analytica scandal. The NHS API has been used to provide answers to health queries on third-party voice assistants and the Twitter API has been used to detect, understand, and counter misinformation.

Unlike Twitter, which is more public and open by default, Facebook is what is known as a 'walled garden' – a controlled data ecosystem with restricted access. As such, it is more complex to carry out research on Facebook, although there are tools (eg CrowdTangle) which provide access to publicly shared content.

If successfully actioned, Recommendations 6 (social media data access) and 7 (best practice tools and guidance) should help develop a more open environment benefiting both researchers and emerging online platforms.

Active bystanders

Active bystanders are individuals who intervene when they see problematic actions or content, unlike passive bystanders who witness problematic content but choose not to intervene. Active bystanders in the online information environment are users who intervene when they witness problematic content (eg abuse or disinformation). In the context of misinformation, an intervention could be to directly respond to a message, or it could involve reporting a user to the social media platform. It may also involve forwarding content to a third party (eg a public health body, a fact checker, or the police) or downrating content in order for it to not feature prominently in users' social media feeds.

Platforms and public bodies have put in measures to make it simpler for internet users to be active bystanders through the use of reporting tools.

Community moderation

Community moderators (individuals with administrative control over an online forum) can play an important role

in ensuring healthy online discourse. However, there are significant limitations for their role in addressing misinformation content as moderators are faced with the challenge of deciding what is and is not misinformation. These moderators are often untrained volunteers, although in recent years there have been moves to pay moderators and provide formal training.

Rules for moderation can be decided by the moderator themselves, or by the community being moderated.

Anti-virals

An emerging trend in the online information environment is a shift away from public discourse to private, more ephemeral, messaging. This creates a challenge for platforms, researchers, and journalists who want to analyse the spread of misinformation as it is highly complex and resource intensive to attempt to study. One solution which has been adopted is to restrict the virality of messages, regardless of whether or not it contains problematic content. This solution has been implemented by WhatsApp with users being unable to easily forward a message which has been through five chat sessions already.

This is achieved by tracking how many times a message has been forwarded with the messages remaining encrypted.

This 'anti-viral' approach has been adopted by Twitter for a different challenge – that of misinformation content shared by politicians or other high-profile figures and institutions. Twitter's approach involves disabling engagement with tweets which contain misleading content (in contravention with Twitter's policies) from high profile figures or with high engagement.

This is part of a wider movement within the company to introduce friction into the platform. Another example is their introduction of a prompt for users to read articles before retweeting them. They claim the prompt led to a third of users (who were about to retweet an article) to read the article first and half of users decided to cancel their retweets.

Collective intelligence

The open nature of the internet reduces the barriers to 'collective intelligence', or the enhanced insights gained from people working together. Examples of collective intelligence in the online information environment include Wikipedia (multiple editors refining encyclopaedic articles), Waze (drivers reporting potholes, traffic light cameras, hazards etc.), and Quora (with users collaborating on question and answers). This can be a particularly useful tool against misinformation content and is akin to the principle of academic peer review, with outputs being evaluated by others.

On Wikipedia, volunteers work together to edit and verify each other's articles with the most controversial topics being the most heavily scrutinised (with thousands of editors). On social media platforms (eg Facebook, Twitter, TikTok), users are able to report problematic content to the company so that they can be addressed. Building on this, Twitter has announced plans to introduce an initiative called 'Birdwatch' in which users are able to write notes and provide context to tweets which they consider

to be misleading. This use of collective intelligence can reduce the reliance of platforms on paid content moderators and automated detection systems.

Traditional institutions have also been making use of collective intelligence techniques. An example of this is the Trusted News Initiative (TNI) led by the public service broadcaster, the BBC. The TNI operates an early warning system of rapid alerts in which partners warn each other about the spread of disinformation content. Partners in the TNI include media outlets such as the AFP, CBC, and the Financial Times and technology companies such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Twitter.

Chapter 4

Trustworthy institutions

Simply being trustworthy is not sufficient, institutions must also demonstrate and communicate their trustworthiness in order to earn trust.

Institutions have a key role to play in ensuring the production, maintenance and communication of good quality scientific information.

Scientific enquiry is a complex endeavor that depends on the collaboration of many people with a wide variety of specialisms and expertise. Institutions (including universities, publishers, archives and learned societies) are essential in facilitating and enabling this collaboration. These institutions provide guarantees as to the quality of research they process, enabling others to trust in and build upon that work. They also supply the expertise necessary to preserve and curate the outputs of research, such as data sets, experimental results, and papers.

Beyond the system of scientific research, the summarisation and accurate communication of complex topic areas requires trustworthy actors skilled in conveying technical and scientific information in accessible ways.

While misinformation about science is not a new phenomenon, the increasing visibility of such misinformation to a broad online audience, and the ability of misinformation actors to connect and reinforce each other, means that there is a need for actors that can be trusted to have a visible presence.

Trust can only be earned through trustworthy behavior. Drawing on the work of Onora O'Neill, institutions which are trustworthy are those that demonstrate they are reliable, competent and honest. Simply being trustworthy is not sufficient, institutions must also demonstrate and communicate their trustworthiness in order to earn trust.

Institutions which consistently act in such a way are likely to find that people place their trust in them. It is important to note that, for many people, trust in establishment institutions may have been damaged over time due to negative individual and collective experiences with them.

This distinction between trust and trustworthiness is especially important with regards to science. Science describes a set of methods that deal with investigating uncertainty and comprises a dynamic set of processes, not a static body of knowledge. The body of scientific knowledge changes over time.

Trustworthiness is domain specific. Institutions develop reliability over time to particular fields, and develop appropriate expertise to those fields. Institutions that are trustworthy with regards to a particular branch of sci-

ence, or any other field of knowledge, may not be able to adequately replicate those in other fields.

Digital technologies pose novel challenges for trustworthy institutions. They offer many opportunities in terms of connecting, synthesising and communicating scientific information. At the same time, while many of the fundamental issues pertaining to misinformation have long histories, the ways that the internet has changed how information is shared, edited and compiled poses new challenges in how trustworthiness is communicated.

Decontextualisation

Traditionally, an important technique for assessing the quality of information has been to evaluate the information's provenance and sources. Regulation has often supported this, as in the cases of publishing, or broadcasting, or print advertising, where an imprint is required, and there may be penalties for false or defamatory content. The nature of online information sharing means that such stamps of authority (and such potential consequences) are often absent, and content shared without credentials and without risk. Even where they do exist, content is frequently excerpted or edited in such a way that the details of authorship, or the endorsement of trustworthy institutions, is lost or mischaracterised in the process.

Strategies for addressing the damage decontextualisation causes can take the form of preserving and emphasising provenance, such as through the use of provenance enhancing technologies such as blockchain to create an immutable paper trail of changes, or the promotion on online platforms of content produced by trustworthy institutions, as has been used to boost public health messaging during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alternatively, strategies can be pursued that improve the ability of people interpret non-provenance-based markers of authority, such as the quality and transparency of data-handling.

Changing and tracking what institutions say

The challenges of communicating inherently dynamic and uncertain scientific topics are compounded by the changeable nature of online material. Much material on the internet is ephemeral, being rapidly uploaded, consumed and discarded. Web pages are regularly edited and updated. Preserving a trail of what different websites, individuals or institutions have said, and how that has changed over time, is an important component of assessing and communicating trustworthiness. However, current attempts to capture the archival data to track this are limited by lack of supporting legislation, addressed in more detail below.

Quantity of information

While no exact figures are available, the number of peer-reviewed scientific journals in the world has been estimated to be approximately 30,000. An estimated 2.5 million scientific papers are published every year, and the number of publishing scientists was estimated in 2018 to be growing by 4–5% a year over the previous decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this trend, with

Nature estimating over 100,000 articles published on the pandemic in 2020 alone, not including the extensive use of non-reviewed pre-print articles made available. One of the largest science publishers saw an increase of 58% in submissions in the same year.

While there are obvious benefits to an increase in the amount of scientific research being made available, the sheer quantity of work poses its own challenges. It becomes increasingly difficult for any one researcher to keep track of all the updates in their own specialism, let alone those in adjacent fields.

The quality of research varies and it can be challenging to take time to evaluate the quality of such a variety of publications. Participants at workshops hosted at the Royal Society have remarked on both the rarity and value of cross-disciplinary approaches to scientific misinformation in different fields.

This creates a demand for hallmarks of trustworthiness and institutions that can help navigate such a broad space. It also increases the importance for authoritative and trustworthy syntheses of evidence, such as those offered by the Cochrane reports in the field of medical science designed to keep practitioners up-to-date with theoretical developments in their field. It also opens up the possibility for advanced data-scraping approaches that can rapidly and accurately collate relevant information from large data sets.

Hallmarks of trustworthiness

What do reliability, competence and honesty look like in practice?

The UK Statistics Authority has formally recognised the importance of trustworthy institutions in its Code of Practice for Statistics, designed to build public confidence in statistics produced by government. The trustworthiness of the people and institutions that handle statistics is the first of three pillars, the others being quality of data and methodology, and demonstrable social value. The Code offers a useful example of the practical operationalisation of principles of trustworthiness. It does this through creating expectations for statistics-handling organisations to demonstrate impartiality, transparent decision making, and appropriate skills and governance capabilities.

Within the scientific system, open science seeks to utilise transparency in a similar way to produce high quality science, guarantee competency, and improve communication. Open science makes scientific papers readily accessible to all audiences, while also offering transparency of the underlying data, and enabling a broader array of reviewer comments on papers. As well as offering transparency, open science approaches give greater scope for the production of replication and null result experiments, which are important parts of the scientific process in reinforcing existing knowledge.

A key part of transparency contributing to trustworthiness is being clear about the objectives being pursued. Science researchers and communicators can act as simple informers trying to accurately represent the current state of knowledge and uncertainty in their particular field, or as persuaders trying to actively effect a change in an audience's thought or behaviour (which could include fellow researchers). While both are valid, it is important to dis-

tinguish between them. Suspicion that actor motivation is being hidden is often cited as a leading reason for an actor losing trust.

The importance of curatorship

The scientific system depends on accurate stores of data and information that are accessible for others to use for research. Maintenance of such stores requires skilled curatorship – trusted libraries and archives are important institutions in this regard.

Libraries are also important locations for the teaching of media and information literacy skills, especially for the adult population.

However, while libraries and archives have started to adapt to the proliferation of online information, their ability to do this is heavily circumscribed by lack of up-to-date legislation.

Although organisations such as the British Library began collecting and archiving websites around 15 years ago, in 2013 the UK Government introduced new regulations that required digital publications to be systematically preserved as part of something known as legal deposit. Legal deposit has existed in English law since 1662 and obliges publishers to place at least one copy of everything they publish in the UK and Ireland – from books to music and maps – at a designated library.

Since it was extended to include digital media, the six designated legal deposit libraries in the UK have accumulated around 700 terabytes of archived web data as part of the UK Web Archive, growing by around 70 terabytes every year. The libraries automatically collect – or crawl – UK websites at least once a year to gather a snapshot of what they contain, while some important websites such as news sites are collected daily. They also collect ebooks, electronic journals, videos, pdfs and social media posts – almost everything that is available in a digital format.

Access to this material is extremely limited. Due to the current legislative framework, historic pages for only around 19,000 or so websites (out of an estimated 4 million) can be accessed through the Web Archive's online portal. These are sites where their creators have given explicit permission to allow open access to their content, but contacting every UK website in this way is almost impossible.

For the rest, even though access is permitted and the material is held digitally, researchers must travel to one of nine named sites in person. These sites are inefficiently distributed around the country, with only one access point in England outside of the London-Cambridge-Oxford triangle. The framework also permits only one researcher to use a piece of material at any one time, an arbitrary limitation when it comes to digital access.

This framework for access is now out-of-date to how people access and use data, and severely limits the value that trustworthy libraries and archives are able to offer. Opening up the Web Archive would allow it to be mined at scale for high quality information using modern text analysis methods, helping address the challenges posed by the sheer quantity of material. It would enable researchers, businesses, journalists and anyone else with an interest to uncover trends or information hidden in web pages from the past.

The frameworks governing electronic legal deposit need to be reviewed and reformed to allow wider access. Part of such review will involve considering the data held in these legal deposits and available on-site that remains commercially valuable, such as newspaper archives. Rather than act as a barrier to access, systems such as micropayments

– like those to authors of books borrowed from libraries already – could be applied to material held in commercial archives. The six designated legal deposit libraries in the UK have accumulated around 700 terabytes of archived web data as part of the UK Web Archive, growing by around 70 terabytes every year.

*University of Cambridge Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech**

Explanatory note (this does not form part of the Code)

Please note that this Code of Practice applies with effect from 1 August 2024 despite a UK Government decision to stop further commencement of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and subsequent announcements about its planned amendment. Footnotes have been added to this published version of the Code of Practice to clarify some factual points arising from this. For more information, see the University's overview page on this topic.

Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Cambridge, as a world-leading education and research institution, is fully committed to the principle, and to the promotion, of freedom of speech.
- 1.2 This Code of Practice sets out the University's commitment to freedom of speech, outlines the various legislative frameworks under which such freedoms must be upheld and may be circumscribed, and summarises the procedures used by the University to manage these issues.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Code of Practice applies to:
 - 2.1.1 all members, staff and students of the University; and
 - 2.1.2 visiting speakers and all other persons invited or otherwise lawfully participating in University activities on University premises.
- 2.2 For the avoidance of doubt, this Code of Practice does not apply to purely commercial meetings or events on University premises.
- 2.3 References in this Code of Practice to 'University premises' means those premises over which the University of Cambridge exercises control, whether indoor or outdoor.
- 2.4 Cambridge Students' Union, and separately each Cambridge College, has its own duty to secure freedom of speech within the law and has issued its own Code of Practice on this topic.¹

3. Key Concepts and Legislative Framework

- 3.1 Freedom of speech means the freedom, within the law, to receive and impart ideas, opinions or information by means of speech, writing or images (including in electronic form) without interference.
- 3.2 Academic freedom, in relation to academic staff at the University, means their freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and

to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without loss of their jobs or privileges at the University, or the likelihood of their securing promotion or different jobs at the University being reduced.

- 3.3 These concepts are underpinned by the Human Rights Act 1998, which brings the European Convention on Human Rights into direct effect in national law. Article 10 of the Convention articulates freedom of expression as a human right and sets out the limited circumstances in which that right might be circumscribed (such as to protect public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, or for the protection of the reputation or rights of others). These concepts also exist within other UK legislation. Universities in England have duties under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (as amended by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023) to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure and promote freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law for staff and students and for visiting speakers.²
- 3.4 Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on certain bodies, including higher education institutions such as the University, in the exercise of their functions to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This necessitates the establishment of protocols and procedures by which to assess the risks associated with meetings or events that are University hosted, affiliated, funded, or branded. This Act also requires the University to have particular regard to its other duties with regard to academic freedom and freedom of speech. Debate, discussion, and critical enquiry are, in themselves, powerful tools in preventing people from being drawn into terrorism.
- 3.5 Under the Equality Act 2010, staff and students must not be subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or threats of violence on the grounds of race, sex, age, religion or philosophical belief, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, or pregnancy or maternity. However, the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 are not to be interpreted to undermine freedom of speech and academic freedom. As a result, students' learning experience and the working environment of staff may include exposure to research, course material, discussion or speakers' views that they find offensive, contentious or unacceptable, but are nonetheless within the law, and unlikely to be considered unlawful har-

assessment or discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

- 3.6 There are other legislative requirements that may be relevant in particular cases, such as offences under the Terrorism Acts if speech encourages terrorism, or amounts to the incitement of religious or racial hatred or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation under the Public Order Acts, as well as statutory requirements relating to the holding of processions and assemblies. The University is not under any obligation to secure or promote freedom of speech that contravenes any legislative requirements.
4. Values
 - 4.1 The University's core values are 'freedom of thought and expression' and 'freedom from discrimination' and it encourages its staff, students and visitors to engage in robust, challenging, evidence-based and civil debate as a core part of academic enquiry and wider University activity, even if they find the viewpoints expressed to be disagreeable, unwelcome or distasteful. The steps the University takes to embed its values in practice are set out in Section 5 below.
 - 4.2 The University fosters an environment in which all of its staff and students can participate fully in University life, and feel able to question and test received wisdom, and to express new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions within the law, without fear of intolerance or discrimination. In exercising their right to freedom of speech, the University expects its staff, students and visitors to be tolerant of the differing opinions of others, in line with the University's core value of freedom of expression. The University also expects its staff, students and visitors to be tolerant of the diverse identities of others, in line with the University's core value of freedom from discrimination. While debate and discussion may be robust and challenging, all speakers have a right to be heard when exercising their right to free speech within the law. Neither speakers nor listeners should have reasonable grounds to feel censored or intimidated.
 - 4.3 The University will ensure that staff are able to exercise freedom of thought and expression within the law without placing themselves at risk of losing their job or any University privileges and benefits they have or the likelihood of their securing promotion or different jobs at the University being reduced. The University expects all staff and students to engage with intellectual and ideological challenges in a constructive, questioning and peaceable way. The right of staff and students to freedom of assembly, and to protest against certain viewpoints, should not obstruct the ability of others to exercise their lawful freedom of speech.
5. Steps the University takes to ensure Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom
 - 5.1 The University will ensure that its teaching, curriculum, policies and procedures reflect its duties to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law and the very high level of protection

for the lawful expression of viewpoints and for speech in an academic context, including but not limited to:

- (a) its processes for programme development and approval, quality assurance and academic assessment;
 - (b) its processes for admission, appointment, re-appointment and promotion;
 - (c) its policies relating to equality, diversity and inclusion (including the public sector equality duty) and the Prevent duty;
 - (d) its processes for facilitating research; and
 - (e) its codes of conduct and other behaviour policies, which will ensure no individual will be subjected to disciplinary sanction or other less favourable treatment by or on behalf of the University because of the lawful exercise of freedom of speech or academic freedom.
- 5.2 The University does not enter into non disclosure agreements related to complaints about sexual misconduct, bullying or harassment.
 - 5.3 The University has processes in place to identify and manage any risks to freedom of speech or academic freedom arising from the terms of certain overseas funding, including funding from endowments, gifts, donations, research grants and contracts, and educational or commercial partnerships.
 - 5.4 The University shall:
 - 5.4.1 ensure that this Code of Practice is brought to the attention of new students at registration and new staff during induction;
 - 5.4.2 draw the attention of students and staff to this Code of Practice annually, and ensure that it is referred to in other University documentation as appropriate;
 - 5.4.3 ensure that all relevant staff are aware of and/or receive appropriate training on freedom of speech and academic freedom;
 - 5.4.4 ensure that all relevant decision-makers, in making any decision or adopting any policy that could directly or indirectly (and positively or negatively) affect freedom of speech, act compatibly with the University's free speech duties as they apply in the relevant circumstances;
 - 5.4.5 periodically seek feedback from staff, students and other stakeholders to secure their views on whether freedom of speech and academic freedom at the institution are being adequately protected and take the responses into account;
 - 5.4.6 ensure that there are adequate measures in place to raise concerns about freedom of speech and academic freedom;
 - 5.4.7 ensure that when new policies and procedures are introduced consideration is given to their impact on freedom of speech and academic freedom;
 - 5.4.8 ensure that it has appropriate processes for the holding of events and meetings as set out in section 6 below;
 - 5.4.9 monitor any concerns that have been

raised about freedom of speech and academic freedom to ensure that they are addressed so far as is reasonably practicable and to address any lessons learned and draw the attention of complainants to its processes for investigating complaints and the OfS complaint scheme as set out in section 7;3 and

5.4.10 take steps to secure compliance with this Code of Practice, including where appropriate taking disciplinary action.

6. University Events and Meetings – Procedures and Conduct of Attendees

6.1 An active speaker programme is fundamental to the academic and other activities of the University and staff and students are encouraged to invite a wide range of speakers and to engage critically but courteously with them, including as set out at paragraph 6.6 of this Code. This Code of Practice provides the only mechanism by which the University can cancel or impose conditions on University meetings or events where this action is deemed necessary as a result of the event's subject matter and/or speaker(s). This is to ensure that the use of University premises is not inappropriately denied to any individual or body of persons on any ground connected with their beliefs or views or the policy or objectives of a body (with the exception of proscribed groups or organisations) of which they are a member. However, all speakers should anticipate that their views might be subject to robust debate, critique and challenge.

6.2 The starting point should always be that the event should go ahead and that cancellation is exceptional and undesirable. Depending on the circumstances, it may however be reasonable to refuse permission for a University meeting or event where the University reasonably believes (from the nature of the speakers or from similar activities in the past whether held at the University or otherwise) that:

6.2.1 the views likely to be expressed by any speaker are contrary to the law;

6.2.2 the speaker is likely to incite breaches of the law or to intend breaches of the peace to occur;

6.2.3 the meeting will not permit contrary or opposing viewpoints to be held or expressed;

6.2.4 the speaker and/or the organisation they represent advocates or engages in violence in the furtherance of their political, religious, philosophical or other beliefs;

6.2.5 the views likely to be expressed by any speaker are for the promotion of any illegal organisation or purpose, including organisations listed on the government's list of proscribed terrorist groups or organisations; or

6.2.6 it is in the interest of public safety, the prevention of disorder or crime, the proper functioning of the University or the protection of those persons lawfully on University premises, that the meeting does

not take place.

6.3 The lawful expression of controversial or unpopular views will not in itself constitute reasonable grounds for withholding permission for a University meeting or event.

6.4 Where the University is reasonably satisfied that the otherwise lawful expression of views at an event or meeting on University premises is likely to give rise to disorder or threats to the safety of participants or the wider University community, the University shall consider what steps it is necessary to take to ensure the safety of all persons and the security of University premises. These may include, but are not limited to: requirements as to the provision of security/stewards, the speaker being part of a panel, ensuring that a member of staff is in attendance, or that the event or meeting should take place in alternative premises, at a later date, or in a different format. The University may impose such conditions and requirements upon the organisers as are reasonably necessary in all the circumstances, ensuring that the conditions and requirements go no further than is necessary to address the risks it has identified. The University will only pass on the costs of security for using the premises to those arranging the relevant event or meeting in exceptional circumstances, such as where the costs are wholly disproportionate to the numbers likely to be attending the event and the event could be held in a more proportionate way, or where the visiting speaker could reasonably be expected to have their own security because of the political or state office they hold. Any request to a meeting or event organiser to pay security costs in exceptional circumstances will be in writing and will explain those costs and any appeal mechanism. Any request to pay security costs will not be influenced to any degree by the ideas or opinions of any individual involved in organising the event or meeting, or by the policy or objectives of, or the views of any of the members of, any body involved in organising the event or meeting.

6.5 These narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of speech are not intended ever to apply in a way that is inconsistent with the University's commitment to the completely free and open discussion of ideas.

6.6 Those attending events and meetings at the University are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the following principles:

6.6.1 everyone has the right to free speech within the law.

6.6.2 the aim of events at the University is to expose members, staff and students to the widest possible range of views, within the law.

6.6.3 protest is itself a legitimate expression of freedom of speech but protesters should recognise the rights of others participating in the event or meeting, and in particular not violate the rights of others to speak during the event. Protest must not shut down debate.

6.7 Where any person or body to whom this Code

of Practice applies is seeking to hold a University event or meeting on University premises which is outside of the normal academic curriculum the processes in the Annex shall be followed, except where the event or meeting is purely commercial.

7. Breaches and Complaints

7.1 Where the University receives a concern about the exercise of academic freedom or freedom of speech or where it has received a concern about a possible infringement or departure(s) from the values and procedures set out in this Code of Practice, it will consider which of its procedures are most appropriate to consider the concern, making such enquiries and seeking such information as it considers necessary. Such consideration may lead to further investigation in accordance with the University's disciplinary procedures (staff or student), or the University's grievance or complaints procedures.

7.2 The Office for Students (OfS) operates a free speech complaints scheme. Under that scheme,

the OfS can review complaints about free speech from members, students, staff, applicants for academic posts and (actual or invited) visiting speakers. Information about the complaints that the OfS can review is available on its website.⁴

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 The University's Committee on Prevent and Freedom of Speech will periodically review the contents and operation of this Code of Practice and report on its operation and recommend amendments to it for consideration by the Council and the General Board as appropriate or necessary.

8.2 The point of contact for any query about this Code of Practice and its Annex is the Secretary to the Committee on Prevent and Freedom of Speech at freespeech@admin.cam.ac.uk.

*<https://www.governanceandcompliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/governance-and-strategy/university-code-practice-freedom-speech>

Lessons from history

TIM HORDER

An exposé in the *New York Times Magazine* in January 1995 announced that:

"Thousands of nude photographs including those of prominent public figures such as George H. W. Bush, Bob Woodward, Meryl Streep, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Diane Sawyer existed in the Smithsonian Archives, readily available for public viewing."

So begins Beth Linker's fascinating book (*Slouch: Posture Panic in Modern America*, Princeton University Press, 2024), which is concerned with the background of this revelation and the historical insights we are led to from it. "The nude photos that Rosenbaum discovered were taken decades earlier, when the pictured individuals were young adults attending college. For much of the twentieth century, a remarkable number of institutions of higher education mandated that their students undergo an annual physical exam, including in posture evaluation...requiring students to pose nude or seminude for the pictures."

A central figure in the story was the physician and psychologist, William Sheldon (1898-1977), author of 13 books including *The Varieties of Human Physique: An Introduction to Constitutional Psychology* (1940), *Varieties of Delinquent Youth* (1949) and *Atlas of Men* (1954). He argued, on the basis of measurements taken from the above mentioned nude photographs later to be bequeathed to the Smithsonian, that there were three basic body types, "somatotypes", which were predictive of character and life histories. "Endomorphs" are

rounded and were said to have a tendency towards a "viscerotonic" personality (i.e., relaxed, comfortable, extroverted); "mesomorphs" are square and muscular and have a tendency toward a "somotonic" personality (i.e., active, dynamic, assertive, aggressive); "ectomorphs" are thin and fine-boned, with a tendency toward a "cerebrotonic" personality (i.e., introverted, thoughtful, inhibited, sensitive). Sheldon's three-way distinctions can probably be traced back to the three germ layers of the embryo which he must have encountered during his medical training at the University of Chicago.

Sheldon's scheme was highly influential. John F. Kennedy, long a victim of crippling back pain, sought the help of a Sheldon advocate, Hans Kraus, with favourable results reported in *Time* magazine. Many universities instituted routine student body-typing as well as promoting corrective exercises. Ivy League colleges and their female counterparts apparently took the lead. Sylvia Plath, at Smith, described the process in letters to her mother and the scarring experience featured in her autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*. Linker describes how the practice was generally abandoned in the early 1970s – in part due to theft of photos. Sheldon's classification still features occasionally in textbooks of psychology and in courses readily available on the web.

The compulsory nude picturing of university students goes back to before the First World War. In 1914 *The American Posture League* – which lasted until 1944 – was founded by the self-taught physical educator, Jessie Bancroft, first occupant from 1904 of the position of assistant director of physical education with the New York

City public schools. Key to the League's campaigning was measurement of posture with the "schematogram" based on the photos taken in profile: on the basis of this "elaborate classification of body types dictated by the intersectionality of race, class, and environment, Bancroft and her colleagues agreed that the scientific postural ideal was the biomechanical "plumb line", a positional mean between the angular soldier on the one hand, and a slumping or overly curvaceous individual on the other."

10,000 young people attended corrective 'posture clinics' annually throughout the 1930s. John Dewey was an early advocate of posture improvement, having himself consulted Matthias Alexander (the Australian Shakespearean actor who created today's 'Alexander technique' for better kinesthetic awareness) in 1916. William James, a yoga enthusiast, also promoted what he called "posture gymnastics". Meanwhile Joseph Hubertus Pilates similarly advanced "the science of Contrology" as a balancing of mind and body. At a time when TB, often affecting the spine, was rife, university applicants with scoliosis were often debarred.

The "Harvard Slouch" was a study undertaken in 1915-17 by Lloyd Brown. It "found that 80 percent of university freshmen exhibited faulty posture." As Linker describes, there was talk of a health epidemic, national decline and the need for self-improvement in fitness as compared to other countries, reflecting a mounting awareness of poverty and poor health at a time when medical science and public health interventions were rapidly advancing.

By the time of the 1930 White House Conference on Children: "it had become accepted fact that a large proportion of the nation's youngsters suffered from poor posture.... forty-six US states required physical education of its school age children, incorporating posture training." President Roosevelt was himself a victim of polio, a common cause of scoliosis. During National Posture Week in 1939 some 2000 retail stores took part across the USA. Linker details the many accompanying social and commercial effects of the posture panic: for example, in shoe fashion, in chair design (featured in a "Fatigue Museum" in Rhode Island), and even controversial changes in attitudes to medical undergarments such as corsets, braces and girdles.

* * *

Our inclination to classify ourselves, especially with respect to our differing mental and personality characteristics, is deep rooted. Early examples are astrology, and, in the modern scientific era, physiognomy and phrenology. Francis Galton stands out for his foundational contribution. Sheldon himself drew ideas from Ernst Kretschmer and possibly Carl Jung, whom he visited. All such theorising leads eventually to questions of scientific verifiability, and in particular to controversies regarding the implications of evolution, genetics and nature versus nurture as determinants of behaviour and character. Linker discusses the classist, racist and sexist undertones of those involved in the posture panic. Sheldon clearly had eugenicist sympathies.

'*Slouch*' brings its theme up to our own times with the case of Richard Herrnstein's and Charles Murray's '*The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*' (1994), which :

"set off a heated and highly publicized debate about the validity of the biological and psychological sciences, especially when deployed with what seemed to be an obvious political agenda.... the bell curve debate was just one of many instances that seemed to point to a rising intellectual interest among nonscientists in the growing visibility of science in the wider American culture.... Concerned with the growing public distrust, certain scientists engaged in the "science wars," attempting to discredit all "outsiders," including social scientists, the media, and academics from the humanities who voiced criticisms. Other scientists, however, joined ranks with nonscientists, voicing real concerns about the wider public's view and literacy in scientific matters. If debates such as the one surrounding The Bell Curve became the norm, how would the general public know whom to believe? What if, in seeing the extent of disagreement among scientists, the general public became convinced that scientists did not know what they were talking about at all?"

In the UK we have had our own relatively recent controversial figure of Hans Eysenck (1916-1997), who can certainly be compared to Sheldon, and we are not only as familiar with back pain as were our great grandparents, but we are still worrying about how best to measure obesity as alternatives to the BMI are being hotly debated.

Must University Leaders Remain Neutral?

ROBERT A. SCOTT

The Congressional hearings held a year ago that challenged several university presidents to make official statements about political issues resulted in many institutions adopting policies of "institutional neutrality." By resolution, the boards of trustees of numerous colleges and uni-

versities declared that they would not take public stands on controversial issues.

Such issues include international conflicts, investments in certain products and countries, and stands taken by elected officials. Many of these policies cite the so-called "Chicago Principles" enunciated in the

“Kalven Committee: Report on the University’s Role in Political and Social Action” issued in 1967 by the University of Chicago. In essence, the Report states that, to protect free speech and freedom of inquiry, university leaders should not engage in speech that would appear to infringe on others’ speech. It argues that the university should be a protected, neutral place for the expression of all ideas, a safe space for “strong disagreement, independent judgment, and the questioning of stubborn assumptions...” (University of Chicago, 1967.) Furthermore, the Report states, a university may “reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression (e.g., a demonstration) to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the university”, i. e., teaching and research. (*op. cit.*)

There are good reasons for universities not to take political stands. When a board of trustees or president issues a statement, it can stifle contrary views; it can appear to suppress disagreement and debate on divisive issues. This would be in violation of the university’s responsibility to foster questioning and respect the role of expertise. Making statements about some issues but not others places the institution in jeopardy of a double standard: indicating that some issues deserve comment but others do not. Such statements can put the institution in a partisan controversy, a place it should avoid.

However, the Kalven Report does not assert that institutions are prohibited from commenting on public policies that would affect institutional autonomy and the freedom of scholars to pursue truth no matter where that pursuit may lead. So, “no” to endorsing Presidential candidates but “yes” to evaluating proposals such as those in “Project 2025” that infringe on the purposes of higher education.

In the main, I agree with these principles. Neutrality does not mean silence. A better term, used by Dartmouth, for example, is “restraint”. After all, should a campus president remain silent in the face of proposals that would undermine long-standing principles of free speech? Doesn’t a university president have an obligation to question policy proposals that would undercut quality controls in higher education? Isn’t it the responsibility of the president and the board to protect the university as the home of critics even as it is not the voice of criticism?

A university has three fundamental roles. It is the creator of new knowledge and new professionals. It is the curator of knowledge in all its forms. And it is the home of critics who question “Why?” and “Why not?” This is not to say that those in higher education always know best or that colleges and universities cannot be improved. However, it is to say that mandates that seek to overturn policies without debate are usually ill-advised and often biased.

Throughout the country Governors and state legislators are promoting policies that proscribe what subjects can be taught, what books can be read, and who can be hired to teach. The much discussed “Project 2025: A Mandate for Leadership” is another example of overreach. Prepared by the Heritage Foundation, the 920-page “blueprint” offers a mandate for multiple changes in government policy related to knowledge and expertise. Forty-four pages, about 5%, are devoted to education.

It alleges, without evidence, a radical left-wing bias in university teaching, among other assertions. At the same time, however, it would require a selective teaching of American history by omitting mention of race and slavery. It also would substitute religious belief for scientific evidence, including weather forecasting and study of the environment. This seems radical to me. It would substitute political tests based on a notion of Christian Nationalism for professional expertise, stifling critical thinking and free speech. It would diminish adherence to the Freedom of Information Act that supports the public’s right to know what its government is doing.

The Project calls for the abolition of the U.S. Department of Education and for reclassifying federal scientists as political appointees. It would turn over consumer protections from predatory proprietary schools to the states and retract the “borrower-defence” repayment provisions of the federal loan system put in place to protect students from for-profit schools and lenders. It would turn college student loans over to private banks, from which they were removed in the 2008 financial crisis, and move funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s), in place since 1890, to the Department of Labour which focuses on statistics not education.

Project 2025 also calls for eliminating Head Start; overhauling the educational accreditation system, reducing its political neutrality; and rolling back Title IX protections for sexual assault survivors and LGBTQ+ students. It calls for ending all investigations into Title IX violations and for prosecuting all government agencies, colleges, corporations, and other private employers that maintain Affirmative Action or DEI policies. Public education was established to ensure an informed citizenry, essential to a functioning democracy. Project 2025 would deny freedoms in favour of authoritarian dictates. Instead of supporting public education, it would allow for the banning of books and restrictions on independent inquiry.

Our history of higher education is not perfect, to be sure. However, it is a history of steadily improving quality and equality because leaders at the campus, state, and federal levels pursued positive agendas for advancing access, excellence, and affordability. Project 2025 would erode this progress without substituting positive alternatives. Project 2025 should be studied and debated. We should affirm the purpose and benefits of education to society and the individual; the need to protect food, water, land, and air from unregulated commerce; and voting as a foundation of democracy. We should honour community obligations as well as individual aspirations. Even entrepreneurs, like judges, depend on the rule of law equally applied.

Project 2025 does not conserve rights and freedoms, it limits them. It opposes inconvenient history and science and would impose views that its authors find more comforting. We must protect fundamental academic values. We can be passionate in their defence without becoming politically partisan. Only by advocating for freedom of inquiry and free speech will we preserve them and our democracy. On this, university leaders should not be neutral.

Doctorates for apprentices?

G.R.EVANS

‘Professional doctorates’ are commonly offered by higher education providers. These are defined by the Open University as meeting ‘the needs and interests of those working in education or health and social care with a thirst for professional excellence and knowledge’. ‘Degree apprenticeships’ with similar attractions are currently on offer up to ‘Masters degree level’. Why should apprenticeships not lead to doctorates too?

The *Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act* of 2009 was followed in 2015 by the launch of the first of the ‘degree apprenticeships’. Those could not be made available in unlimited numbers because an apprenticeship must be supported by an employer willing to pay towards a salary. Since 2017 there has been an ‘apprenticeship levy’ of 0.5 per cent on any employer’s annual pay bill if that is over £3m, whether or not the employer actually offers apprenticeships.

In 2019, the ‘Augur’ *Post-18 review of education and funding*¹ devoted a chapter each to ‘Skills’ and ‘Apprenticeships’. It noted that the apprenticeships at degree-Level 6 and up to Masters degree level 7 were ‘very small in number other than in Business, Administration and Law, and (to a lesser degree) Health and Social Care’.² That reflected the degree of attractiveness to participating employers and therefore the viability of such courses for the higher education providers they also needed.

‘Skills England’, set up in September 2024,³ is to oversee the development of a new Skills Levy in ‘a new partnership with employers at its heart’ while reforming the apprenticeship levy.⁴ Even if this encourages expansion of ‘degree apprentice’ opportunities they remain something of an anomaly academically. Masters-level degree apprenticeships have been accepted without much controversy. Could they be followed by degree-apprenticeships at doctoral level?

Government support for apprenticeships at degree level is strong. In November 2024 the White Paper *Invest 2035: the UK’s modern industrial strategy*,⁵ called for more of them, with demand continuing to outstrip supply. £40 million of funding was provided by the Department for Education through its Higher Education ‘strategic degree apprenticeships funding’ competition (2023-25).⁶ This was to be disbursed in three ‘waves’, to support stated ‘programme aims’ including expansion of the existing provision and the addition of providers ‘new to the degree apprenticeships market’. The Universities and Colleges Application Service provides an ‘Apprenticeship search’. Will that level of enthusiasm be ready to support ‘doctoral’ apprenticeships?

The Government’s stated aim was to further an ‘industrial strategy’. But that has only sharpened the long-standing unanswered question whether an apprentice is primarily engaged in education or ‘training’. *Augur* noted the problem of the ‘complexity’ of the supervision

involved in guaranteeing the educational aspect.⁷ The quality and standards of apprenticeships are checked by the regulatory higher education bodies primarily with reference to their ‘educational’ value. The Office for Students has ‘a specific role in assessing the quality of end-point assessments for ‘integrated’ higher and degree apprenticeships’, in the case of providers registered both with the OfS and on the Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register. The OfS assesses the outcome of a degree apprenticeship, OfQual the outcome of an apprenticeship at degree level where the apprentice already has a relevant degree. Ofsted inspects the quality of apprenticeships at all levels and remains the single body ultimately responsible for their quality assurance.

‘Masters’ degree apprenticeships have multiplied and are now about half the total of degree apprenticeships in a climate where press coverage of ‘skills’ has recently been lively, not least those involving apprenticeships.⁸ However there have been complaints that funding for Masters degree apprenticeships is being spent on ‘executive’ education⁹ and concerns have been expressed about their place in skills provision generally.¹⁰ The Government intends to close them down, leaving those already holding them facing some uncertainty about their long-term status as a qualification.

Degree apprenticeships are chiefly offered by the former polytechnics which gained university title and degree-awarding powers under the *Further and Higher Education Act* of 1992. They have variously felt free to offer the eight ‘growth-driving’ subjects identified by *Invest 2035*. For example, the University of the West of England offers ‘degree apprenticeships’ for Advanced Clinical Practitioners, Healthcare Science Practitioners, Nursing Practitioners and others. Apprentice courses do not as a rule include arts and humanities, modern languages or many STEM subjects. An apprentice successful in ‘health studies’ will not become a nurse or a doctor without added training. Nor will a ‘solicitor apprentice’ qualify to be a solicitor without a degree, qualifying work experience and taking further assessments. ‘Engineer apprentices’ have open to them qualification as Engineering Technician, Incorporated Engineer; Chartered Engineer and Information and Communication Technology Technician and may even aspire to a doctorate (EngD), but here too there will be additional requirements.

A small pilot for a new Medical Doctor Degree Apprenticeship began in September 2024, intended to lead to qualification as medical ‘doctor’ but not to a doctorate. However, these apprentices are ‘required to attend medical school, complete an accredited medical degree like all other medical students, and meet all other criteria to qualify as a doctor as set out by the General Medical Council’. Government is to close these down, in a climate of public concern about recent attempts to deal

with the current shortage of traditionally qualified doctors by offering Physician Associates with degrees who have taken some ‘postgraduate training’ to perform a number of day-to-day tasks under the supervision of a qualified doctor.¹¹

Degree-level apprenticeships may also be offered by ‘alternative providers’ such as Henley Business School. Some London Livery Companies have also been attracted to offering ‘degree apprenticeships’. Beginning experimentally in 2012, the Worshipful Company of Farriers began to award Foundation degrees in Farriery (FdSc) and a BSc (Hons) in Farriery in conjunction with Myerscough College. The College does not have its own degree-awarding powers, so these degrees in Farriery are awarded by the University of Central Lancashire. Degree-apprenticeships offered by providers without their own degree-awarding powers may be at risk of unsatisfactory franchising arrangements.¹²

Russell Group universities tend not to offer degree apprenticeships, because they may find it difficult to bring together their exercise of their degree-awarding powers and their responsibilities as employers. Oxford University allows its employees to seek apprenticeships, but from another provider, and only at higher education Levels 4 and 5. Its Careers Service has been considering opportunities for job experience and paid employment within the University for its own students, but subject to Oxford’s rules about the employment of current undergraduate students which permit them to work up to twenty hours a week in term-time. There is no provision for rewarding performance in employment in awarding a degree. Nor does the University offer degree-level apprenticeships.

By 2023 Cambridge had closed all its listed apprentice categories except ‘architecture’, even though that had attracted seventy-six takers for the ‘Senior Leader apprenticeships’ it offered through Continuing Education at postgraduate Masters Level 7. These did not lead to Cambridge’s own degrees but were provided by Anglia Ruskin and Cranfield Universities.

Yet both Oxford and Cambridge have been offering ‘professional’ doctoral degrees for a quarter of a century without making them apprenticeships. Through its Continuing Education Department Oxford offers D.Phils, among them a number with practical as well as theoretical aspects, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, evidence-based health care and sustainable urban development. A degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine was introduced in Cambridge 1999, followed by degrees of Doctor of Engineering and Doctor of Education.

When Cambridge introduced a Doctor of Business Degree in its Judge Business School in 2016, it promised that the degree would be ‘relevant to practice, facilitating transformational leadership in organizations’, but also that the Bus.D. would differ from ‘the practitioner doctoral degrees, among them the D.B.A. (Doctor of Business Administration)’ offered by other business schools in being ‘targeted at individuals’ with a high ‘level of experience’ by ‘leveraging the seniority and exceptional experience of its students’, who, with a £230K fee, were expected to be very few. So it proved. Its current students are three, admitted respectively in 2020, 2022 and 2023.¹³ There seems to have been no notion that these

might become doctoral degree apprenticeships or that they might be more attractive if they were.

Is the multiplication of ‘doctoral degree apprenticeships’ desirable while the fundamental character and purpose of apprenticeships remains under active discussion? The balance of practical or professional training with academic study is inevitably distorted by lifting the degree apprenticeship to doctoral level where, although there are now numerous ‘taught’ and ‘professional’ doctorates the expectation of an element of research could be hard to insist on.¹⁴

1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ceeb35740f0b62373577770/Review_of_post_18_education_and_funding.pdf
2. Augur, p.152.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/skills-england>
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2024>
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy>
6. https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/8854/degree-apprenticeships-funding-competition-guidance_oct-2023.pdf
7. Augur, p.152.
8. For example <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/jan/06/warning-of-skills-chasm-amid-huge-uk-regional-divide-in-qualifications>
9. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/jobs/companies-misuse-430m-taxpayer-funded-apprenticeship-grants/>
10. Including in *The Times* on 9 January.
11. <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/medical-associate-professions/roles-medical-associate-professions/physician-associate>
12. Office for Students, *Subcontractual arrangements in higher education*, 3 September, 2024, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/subcontractual-arrangements-in-higher-education/>
13. <https://www.jbs.cam.ac.uk/phd-research-masters/business-doctorate/students/>
14. <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/phd-study/5-routes-to-getting-a-doctorate>

home

(for Esme)

an old photograph
to remind me
where I come from
another, taken later
to give me hope
notebook of my days
small sea-worn stone
you gave me (to hold
in my hand)
warm coat, strong shoes
courage
an apple

clearing

so they came, at night –

and how the thatch burned
dogs howled, women yelled
and spat

later some crossed the sea with nothing
but the clothes they wore, a bundle
(gathered quickly) in their arms

they took their language
and their stories
but no-one understood them –

they could still curse those
who turned them
from their dwelling-house –

some made a kind of living

[untitled]

on a small island in the lake
six lapwings

still, almost

only their crests blow
a few feathers

they stand four-square
into the wind –

what are they waiting for

no, not waiting, simply obeying
some old imperative

that might be to tumble
out of the sky

utter their wild song

but for now it's to stand here
in the gathering dark

until first light

SUE LEIGH

Sue Leigh's second collection of poems, *Her Orchards*, was published by Two Rivers Press in 2021; her most recent publications are two limited-edition pamphlets of poems, *Chalk* and *Simmer Dim*, published in 2023 and 2024 by Evergreen Press. Her collaboration with the Cornish painter Alice Mumford, *A Painter and a Poet: Conversations in Colour*, was published by Sansom & Company in 2023.

The Oasis

(opening extract)

We pulled into Masallah's place at around five thirty, planning to only stop for a drink, but saw straight away that we'd stay overnight, and asked him directly.

Sure, he said. Sure. He remembered us from when it was just a hut, twenty years previously. Now it was almost what you'd call a complex. As well as the six beach rooms, he had six more behind, plus the two on the ridge, set on their own, that he'd had the last time. There was air con now, and they didn't turn the generator off at night.

I used to like it when we just had the oil lamp, I said to Moke.

He said, Masallah looks older. I hardly recognized him.

The profile's the same. Profiles don't change. Just the hair is greyer.

The sea was a trenchant blue and incredibly azure where it met the sky, a fine line leading nowhere.

The sea's pretty good, Moke said. The sea's something that doesn't change either.

We clasped hands, mine thin and brown, his just a little puffy at the knuckles, sitting right there on the edge of the world with the rocks below us.

Masallah came up and said he'd given us the last room available, up on the ridge, the one on the outside.

That's where we stayed the last time, I said.

Masallah smiled and bowed a little, just to acknowledge the positive co-incidence.

We took stuff from the car. The parking area was right next to the Basilica, or its remains anyway. The dome was intact and the window apertures still showed the shape of the original intention. It was a monastery in Byzantine times and the place was still hung with the air of the holy, for me at least. I could never tell with Moke. Maybe he just went along with what I was saying. He wasn't spiritual.

Right next to the Basilica was a Roman mosaic, a big one, spread over several sections and magnificently intact, or at least it had been.

See how it's shrunk, I said to Moke.

There were bare patches where people had prised off and taken pieces. Someone had laid cement in the gaps. It looked like the outer reaches of a derelict playground.

Why would they do that? I said to Moke.

He gave a shrug. Mementoes, maybe. Trying to make this history a part of themselves.

We carried our bags along the dirt path to the two cottages set side by side.

As we came around the corner we saw a couple at the table on the front deck of the first cottage. Both had white hair and he was gesticulating.

Just look at you, we heard him saying. You're a fucking mess. Get inside and do something about it, for Christ's sake.

He saw us and changed tone straight away.

Just go inside, sweet, and tidy yourself up a bit.

We had to walk past them, there was no other way, the cliff was right next to us, we could hear the sea beating in to the rock face.

The woman was smiling as I passed her, lips drawn back from uneven teeth, and a runnel of blood, bright red against

her dead-white skin, was trickling over the prominent bulge of her left cheekbone.

Hello, I said, and Moke did too, just like it was normal, just like we hadn't seen or thought anything.

The man responded with a Good Afternoon, nodding and smiling. The woman didn't respond at all.

Can we help with anything?

I don't know whether I did say that. I wanted to, I believe I did, and he reacted saying no, no, no, everything was fine, she nodding this time, a ghastly puppet, with the smile painted like a rictus onto her face.

We crossed over the line into our own piece of veranda, they'd gone in already.

Is that what I think it is? I said to Moke.

I don't know. It could be.

She couldn't have fallen.

We don't know. We don't know.

The door wasn't locked, we took our bags in. Everything was just the same as it had been. The bed, the couch, the rickety table. The mosquito nets, stained with something, were bundled up and shoved through the bed head.

It's daylight robbery, Moke said. What they're charging now. But it's special, isn't it?

He gave me a hug and I could feel how much thinner his bones were than just a week ago.

It's special, I said.

We laid out our things, arranged them carefully like it was a ritual, which it was I suppose, this whole trip was a ritual. Moke had been disinclined to come at first. What with being so tired all the time, and wanting to stay close to home comforts.

I don't want a bucket list, is what he said. I told him it wouldn't be a bucket, just a visit to something we'd shared all those years ago.

Girne. Famagusta. Dipkarpaz. And we could even go up to Apostolos Andreas, I said, just a little triumphant, as though it was a clincher.

Moke looked enquiring.

You know, I said. You remember. The saint they all pray to. You go there if you're ill with something and in need of a cure.

Moke put out his hand and said, You're not going to hold your breath for anything like that, are you?

I shook my head.

Even so, we could try it.

He pressed my fingers and said, You'd like that, wouldn't you?

I would if you would.

I didn't cry, though that was one of the times I wanted to. We booked the tickets the very next morning. And now, almost without it happening, we were here.

CLARE MORGAN

Clare Morgan is a novelist and short story writer, and founder and director of Oxford University's Master of Studies in Creative Writing. Her latest short story collection *Scar Tissue* was published by Seren in 2022.

REVIEWS

‘Twas (and ‘Tis) Ever Thus?



Laurence R. Veysey *‘The Emergence of the American University’* (The University of Chicago Press, 1965)

Catching up somewhat belatedly with Laurence R. Veysey’s *‘The Emergence of the American University’* (The University of Chicago Press, 1965) I was struck by certain themes the author addresses as features of the American University that emerged in the 1890s/1900s – the era that gave us the dominant global model/ideal of the University for the twentieth-century (and indeed arguably on into the present century).

First, the student as consumer: Veysey comments that ‘Student expectations could aptly be reported in the phrases of the marketplace... [quoting from a 1912 text –]

“The student regards a professor’s course simply as a credit. Of these he is compelled to purchase with his time a certain number for a degree. Occasionally he discovers a bargain, technically known as a snap, whereat he rejoices, despising however the teacher from

whom he can buy a credit so cheap. When on the other hand... he finds himself in a course which requires more than the average amount of study, he feels that he has been sold... That professor is a skinflint; he sells a credit too high.”

Second, he notes the emergence and rapid growth of ‘The Administration’ – citing the first ever texts on the governance and management of the University (Thwing, *‘College Administration’*, 1900; and Eliot (he President of Harvard), *‘University Administration’*, 1908 – both still useful today in terms of how to handle the lay trustees and rich donors: see below re Stanford. He comments: ‘The pronounced rise of administration after 1890 brought with it an alarm in many quarters that managerial staffs were running away with the American university.’. Now we talk of “Administrative Bloat” and of managerialism/corporatism v collegiality/shared-governance. A 1907 academic is quoted:

‘There is set up within the university an “administration” to which I am held closely accountable. They steer the vessel, and I am one of the crew. I am not allowed on the bridge except when summoned... In authority, in dignity, in salary, the “administration” are over me, and I am under them.’.

Third, and linking to the above theme, ‘academic institutions came in many ways to resemble businesses’ – now we speak of the commercialisation & commodification of the university within the politics of neoliberalism.

And finally, the first of the periodic purges of lefty academics by those lay trustees leaning on the Administration (think the McCarthy 1950s era seeking out academic commies and probably now the ‘culture wars’ as Republicans smoke out the hyper-woke faculty) was triggered by the widow of the founder of Stanford University demanding the President of the University sack Professor Ross for speaking out as a Democrat. The wealthy widow in a 1903 letter to the hapless President spoke of Ross’s malign influence within ‘her’ University, seeing him as aligned ‘with the political demagogues of San Francisco, exciting their evil passions... [he] plays into the lowest and vilest elements of socialism... he ought not to be retained at Stanford University... God forbid that Stanford University should ever favour socialism of any kind.’ (with its 2020s c20 billion USD endowment one suspects that remains pretty unlikely!).

DAVID PALFREYMAN

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